United Nations S/2001/130

Security Council

Distr.: General
13 February 2001

Original: English

Letter dated 13 February 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

We had a comprehensive and fruitful exchange of views at the Security Council's open debate on the theme "strengthening cooperation with troop-contributing countries" on 16 January 2001. In a statement by the President of the Security Council dated 31 January 2001 (S/PRST/2001/3), the Council took note of the views expressed in the debate and also recognized the need for a transparent three-way relationship between the Council, the Secretariat and the troop-contributing countries that will foster a new spirit of partnership, cooperation and confidence.

The Council established a working group of the whole on United Nations peacekeeping operations, which was also requested, as a first step, to undertake an in-depth consideration of, inter alia, all the proposals made in the Council's public meeting on 16 January 2001. The presidential statement noted that an indicative list of all the ideas and proposals arising from the meeting on 16 January 2001 would be forwarded to the working group for its consideration.

The Singapore delegation has carefully studied and analysed all the statements made at the open debate on 16 January 2001 in an effort to prepare a comprehensive and detailed indicative list of all the ideas and proposals put forward. The ideas and proposals can be clustered into three distinct areas:

(a) Suggestions for improving the form and content of meetings and consultations in the three-way relationship between the Council, the troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat;

(b) Suggestions for other mechanisms and measures to strengthen communication, consultations and cooperation between the three partners, including in accordance with paragraph 61 of the report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (see A/55/305-S/2000/809) and in furtherance of Security Council resolution 1327 (2000) of 13 November 2000;

(c) Suggestions for tackling persistent peacekeeping problems, such as the shortfall in the contributions of troops and civilian police to United Nations peacekeeping operations, the failures and shortcomings of United Nations peacekeeping operations and the safety and security of peacekeepers.

A paper listing all the suggestions is attached (see annex). While some of the suggestions may appear repetitive, we have decided to include even slight variations

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since differences in nuance are significant in this discussion. Our goal was to be comprehensive and to include all suggestions (except those points already listed in S/PRST/2001/3). We would like to apologize if we failed to capture any suggestion made in the open debate.

We would like to forward the list to the working group for its consideration. We hope that the working group will find this list useful in its work on fostering a new spirit of partnership, cooperation and confidence in the three-way relationship. The list is by no means exhaustive. Other suggestions could be raised in the working group.

I would be grateful if this letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kishore **Mahbubani**
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Annex to the letter dated 13 February 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Indicative list of ideas and proposals arising from the open debate on "strengthening cooperation with troop-contributing countries" on 16 January 2001

A. Improvement of Meetings and Consultations

1. Full implementation of the relevant provisions of Security Council resolution 1327 (2000) of 13 November 2000.

2. Consideration of the relevant provisions of General Assembly resolution 55/135 of 8 December 2000.

3. Full implementation of the guidelines for TCC meetings laid down in the statement of the President of the Security Council on 28 March 1996 (S/PRST/1996/13) and 4 November 1994 (S/PRST/1994/62).

4. Private meetings with troop-contributing countries as provided for in resolution 1327 (2000) should become an integral part of the Security Council's and the Secretariat's planning and conduct of peacekeeping operations. They should be organised more often and more systematically.

5. Formalisation of the modalities, including the format, procedures and documentation, and substantive guidelines for private meetings with troop-contributing countries. These should be adhered to and constantly improved upon.

6. The private meeting between the Council and troop-contributing countries to the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) held on 4 October 2000 could serve as a model for the private meetings with troop-contributing countries.

7. Council members and Secretariat representatives should be present at a senior level at all consultations with troop-contributing countries. The latter should also be present at an appropriate level.

8. Meetings with troop-contributing countries should be held in good time, well before the Council takes decisions on the extension or termination of, or the modification of the mandate of a peacekeeping operation.

9. Institutionalisation of a consultation process between troop-contributing

countries and the Council at all stages of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, including the planning stages.

10. Consultations should be held when the mandate of a new peacekeeping operation is being formulated, when the concept and/or plan of operation of a peacekeeping operation are being considered, when the extension of the mandate of a peacekeeping operation is being considered, when a substantive modification of the mandate of a peacekeeping operation - including the broadening or narrowing of its scope, changes in the rules of engagement and the introduction of new functions or components – is being considered, when significant developments occur which in the opinion of the Secretary-General, members of the Council or troop-contributing countries are likely to be affect materially the functioning of the operation and/or its ability to fulfil its mandate, and when the withdrawal in whole or in part of an operation is being considered.

11. Consultations should be part of the process of developing and refining the concept of operation for a United Nations peacekeeping operation. This should be considered at the meetings with troop-contributing countries.

12. Consultations should be held before the Council changes the status of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, the legal framework within which peacekeepers operate, or the rules of engagement.

13. Consultations are necessary when addressing the transition from peacekeeping to peace-building, considering that peacekeepers are uniquely placed to ensure that this process takes place in a secure environment.

14. The Council should respond to any request by a troop-contributing country to convene a meeting with troop-contributing countries, especially in cases where the Council is considering an amendment or review of a given peacekeeping mandate, or when there is a significant deterioration of security conditions in the region where the mission is operating that would jeopardise the safety and security of its personnel.

15. Striving for greater transparency throughout all phases of a peacekeeping operation.

16. The Secretariat should provide troop-contributing countries and Council members background materials and an agenda well in advance of

meetings with troop-contributing countries, as provided for in S/PRST/1996/13. Similarly, the date and venue should be, as far as circumstances allow, announced in the Journal of the United Nations several days before the event.

17. The Secretariat should improve access to information in order to facilitate a meaningful and full exchange of views. It should provide information of high quality and accuracy to enable meaningful consultations, effective planning, and formulation of clear and credible mandates. It should provide unvarnished and professional reports to Council members and the troop-contributing countries.

18. Meetings with troop-contributing countries should include the necessary comprehensive and substantive briefings by the Secretariat. The substantive content and nature of the Secretariat's briefings should be in line with the letter and spirit of resolution 1327 (2000). The Secretariat should go beyond generally available information and analysis of situations. The troop-contributing countries should be taken into confidence. The briefings should be in line with those given to the Council, of a higher level of expertise and analysis, and include frank assessments of developments. They should tell the troop-contributing countries what they need to know.

19. Improving the quality of military advice given to the Council to ensure that Council decisions are militarily sound. The United Nations Military Adviser should continue to brief the Council on military matters. He should also be available to brief troop-contributing countries.

20. Military briefings by the Secretariat should include concept of operations and key military factors, such as chain of command, force structure, unity and cohesion of the force, training and equipment, risk assessment and rules of engagement.

21. A fuller military appreciation should be given by the Secretariat at a meeting with troop-contributing countries, if the Council is considering a significant alteration of the mandate or the size of the force of a peacekeeping operation.

22. The Secretariat should, if need be, share the political and military briefing notes informally with the troop-contributing countries and Council members. It is requested to make available the briefing notes to the troop-contributing countries and Council members well in advance of consultations.

23. Encouraging substantive and meaningful dialogue in the meetings with troop-contributing countries.

24. Consultations should ensure that the troop-contributing countries are clear about the goals and concerns of the Council and know what to expect in both general and specific terms, including the scope of the peacekeeping operation, the strategies for the operation, and the risks and threats involved.

25. Troop-contributing countries should be apprised of all necessary aspects so that they can undertake an objective analysis of the situation, give their views and inputs to the Council and the Secretariat, decide on their participation in the peacekeeping operation, and better prepare themselves and their troops for the operation.

26. Meetings with troop-contributing countries could address the question of the safety and security of peacekeepers.

27. Participants in the meetings with troop-contributing countries should share operational information, including about situation on the ground, which they have.

28. At the early stages of consultation, it would be useful to take onboard inputs from the Lessons Learned Unit of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

29. More frequent attendance by the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and/or Force Commanders at the meetings with troop-contributing countries could be useful.

30. Continuation of the practice, as stated in S/PRST/1996/13, of inviting to the meetings with troop-contributing countries, Member States which make special contributions to peacekeeping operations other than troops – that is, civilian personnel, contributions to trust funds, logistics and equipment.

31. Possibility of regional organisations taking part in United Nations peacekeeping operations with coordinated forces participating in consultations with the Council and troop-contributing countries.

32. Possibility of the host country of a peacekeeping operation and the countries in the region especially affected participating in the meetings

with troop-contributing countries, based on the circumstances of each case.

33. The Secretariat should keep a record of the meetings with troop-contributing countries, as necessary.

34. Every report of the Secretary-General to the Council on developments affecting peacekeeping operations should include his assessment of the consultations held with troop-contributing countries.

35. The Council should take into account the views and inputs provided by troop-contributing countries in its decision-making on peacekeeping operations. It should have more substantive discussions on the views and points expressed by troop-contributing countries at the meetings with troop-contributing countries during its informal consultations.

36. If the views of troop-contributing countries could not be reflected in the Council's decision, the Council should explain to them why while preserving confidence.

37. Possibility for the troop-contributing countries to exchange views with the Council through its President should continue.

38. Troop-contributing countries providing formed units to a peacekeeping operation should have access to Secretariat briefings to the Council on matters affecting the safety and security of their personnel, or pertaining to a change or reinterpretation of a mission's mandate with respect to the use of force.

39. Troop-contributing countries should be recognised as parties in respect of a conflict area, including the question of calling for a Council meeting.

40. The Secretariat holding regular meetings for and providing timely, relevant and comprehensive information regarding the situation on the ground to troop-contributing countries enable them to follow peacekeeping operations at every stage.

41. Informal consultations between troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat remain critical to the task of preparing and sustaining effective peacekeeping operations.

42. The planning process within the Secretariat can be made more

effective, coherent and transparent, by involving troop-contributing countries in the early stages of planning and throughout the lifetime of a mission particularly with regard to risk analysis and rules of engagement. Senior planners from troop-contributing countries could be brought to the Secretariat on a short-term basis to assist in mission planning.

43. The Secretariat should consult troop-contributing countries during the preparation and review of guidelines for United Nations peacekeepers.

44. The Secretariat should hold more regular meetings for troop-contributing countries to meet with Special Representatives of the Secretary-General and/or Force Commanders.

45. The Secretariat should for each peacekeeping mission develop a dossier that contains the names and contact information of the relevant personnel in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and other United Nations bodies and agencies involved in the mission.

46. Consultations between the Council and regional actors, where appropriate, should be sustained and institutionalised. The Secretariat is requested to assume responsibility for the transportation and accommodation costs of delegates invited from the capitals to brief or consult with the Council or the Secretariat.

47. More flexible forms of exchange and communication between the Council, the Secretariat, and troop-contributing countries should be considered to inspire a free exchange of views. Other types of consultations with different formats could be held according to how things develop in the future.

B Mechanisms and Measures

1. Putting in place a structure for ongoing dialogue between the Council and troop-contributing countries. This arrangement could operate both vertically, in relation to individual peacekeeping missions, and horizontally, in relation to cross-cutting issues concerning peacekeeping. This mechanism should not replace the current provisions under which the Council has formal consultations with troop-contributing countries prior to each mandate renewal.

2. Institutionalisation of a mechanism allowing for the participation of troop-contributing countries in the Council's decision-making process at

all stages of a United Nations peacekeeping operation, including at the initial stages of planning.

3. Establishment of ad hoc subsidiary organs of the Council, as provided for in Article 29 of the United Nations Charter, in an appropriate form.

4. Establishment of ad hoc subsidiary organs of the Council, as provided for in Article 29 of the United Nations Charter, based around a "core group" of troop-contributing countries for each peacekeeping operation, as identified by the Secretary-General. They would become operational at the conceptual phase of each operation. Consultations with the "core group" should begin well in advance of the establishment of the operation and be factored into the drawing up of new mandates. These will continue on a regular basis throughout the implementation phase, held in particular when the Council is considering a change in the mandate of an operation, including the use of force, or renewal of or completion of as mandate, or when there is a rapid deterioration of the situation on the ground, which threatens the safety and security of peacekeepers. The proposal does not supplant the Charter role of the Council.

5. Establishment of a body for each peacekeeping operation, comprising members of the Council, the troop-contributing countries contributing formed units to the peacekeeping operation and the concerned members of the Secretariat. The body will meet regularly at all stages of a peacekeeping operation, including the earliest stages of mission planning, when the Council is formulating the mandates or legal framework within which the peacekeepers operate, when preparations are underway for deployment, whenever there are significant changes in the situation on the ground especially a rapid deterioration of the situation that threatens the safety and security of peacekeepers, when the Council is considering changes in the mandates or legal framework, and when the Council is considering winding up or scaling down the peacekeeping operation.

6. Establishment for each United Nations peacekeeping operation of an "operation-specific cooperative committee", under Article 29 of the United Nations Charter. It will comprise members of the Council, the troop-contributing countries contributing formed military units and/or senior command personnel, and the concerned members of the Secretariat. The body, presided over by a Council member with a natural lead interest in the situation, will meet regularly at all stages of a peacekeeping operation. It will be a decision-making body and will

entail troop-contributing countries participating in the pre-decision-making of the Council. Decisions will normally be made by consensus. Troop-contributing countries that could not rally to an emerging consensus will withdraw. The Secretariat will actively support the body; participation by the relevant UN agencies would be essential. In every phase of a peacekeeping operation, it will be important that the committee receive sound military advice from the United Nations Military Adviser and the Force Commander. They should be able to answer the key questions whether the plan is militarily sound and if the forces proposed for the operation are sufficient. The parties to the conflict will be excluded. Modalities for consultations with the parties to the conflict will be developed on a case-by-case basis. (A detailed proposal is contained in Security Council document S/2001/73 of 23 January 2001.)

7. Establishment of a formal committee to institutionalise troop-contributing countries' advice to the Council. The committee, chaired by the President, should comprise all Council members and all troop-contributing countries which contribute formed units to the peacekeeping operation on the Committee's agenda. The Committee will have a regular cycle of meetings, as well as convene to discuss new deployments, new mandates and other significant changes to an operation, including troop reductions. The committee could be assisted by an informal sub-committee, perhaps at experts' level and including officials of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

8. Groups of friends play a useful role when they are open and bring together the Council members, the main troop-contributing countries, the countries of the region, and possibly foreign donors.

9. The Council's Working Group on United Nations peacekeeping operations could establish a more direct link with the troop-contributing countries. The latter could form a corresponding group for each main peacekeeping operation.

10. Exploiting the potential of the Military Staff Committee to strengthen United Nations peacekeeping activities.

11. Tasking, in accordance with Article 47 of the United Nations Charter, the Military Staff Committee to provide advice to and assist the Council on all questions relating to the Security Council's military requirements for the maintenance of international peace and security. In addition to the Chiefs of Staff of the permanent members of the Security Council or

their representatives, the Military Staff Committee shall invite the Chiefs of Staff or their representatives of elected members of the Security Council and those troop-contributing countries who contribute formed units to a particular peacekeeping operation, to participate in its meetings in order to enable the Committee to assist the Council in a comprehensive manner as envisaged under the United Nations Charter.

12. Troop-contributing countries should commit themselves to an agreed set of tasks with the resources and problems identified and establish that they have the means to discharge their obligations, when agreeing to participation in a United Nations peacekeeping operation.

13. Troop-contributing countries should be informed and accept in advance material changes to the terms and conditions under which they committed their troops. This is essential when there is a formal change from a Chapter VI to a Chapter VII mandate.

14. Establishing a mechanism which gives effect to Articles 43 and 44 of the United Nations Charter, in particular inviting countries which have contributed formed units to a particular peacekeeping operation to participate in decision-making by the Council concerning the employment of their formed units, at significant stages of a peacekeeping operation.

15. While authorising the use of force, the Council should adhere to and follow the procedure laid down in Articles 43 and 44 of the United Nations Charter, in particular inviting countries which have contributed formed units to a particular peacekeeping operation to participate in decision-making by the Council concerning the employment of their formed units.

16. Each peacekeeping operation authorised by the Council should have its own mechanisms for consultations and cooperation between the Council, the troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat.

17. The responsibilities of the Council, the troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat in the partnership should not be blurred.

18. The Council has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, and the ultimate decision-making authority on peacekeeping operations. Any mechanism, process or structure should not hinder Council decision-making, in particular undercut the

Council's ability to make effective and timely decisions. The efficiency of the Council in fulfilling its responsibilities, as set out in the United Nations Charter, should not be affected.

19. National contingents of troop-contributing countries in a peacekeeping operation could, based on their experience on the ground, report their views on any particular aspect of the operation to the Force Commander and/or the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The latter would take this information into account in preparing the relevant reports of the Secretary-General to the Council.

20. Continuation of the meetings between Council members and troop-contributing countries before and after Council missions to on-going United Nations peacekeeping operations.

21. Participation of troop-contributing countries and other Member States, when appropriate, in public meetings of the Council to discuss the reports of Council missions to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

22. Inclusion, when appropriate, of major troop-contributing countries on Council Missions to on-going United Nations peacekeeping operations.

23. Encouraging the ACABQ to meet with troop-contributing countries before it leaves for field trips to United Nations peacekeeping operations, and to hold informal discussions with Council members and troop-contributing countries on its return.

24. Conduct of reconnaissance missions by all troop-contributing countries contributing formed units to a peacekeeping operation to the area of operations of the operation prior to the deployment of their troops. These missions should be funded by the United Nations and their reports shared with the Secretariat, the Council and concerned troop-contributing countries, if necessary, during meetings in New York. If a meeting between the Council, the Secretariat and the troop-contributing countries cannot be arranged, the Secretariat should record faithfully and circulate to all concerned what a reconnaissance team has returned with.

25. Association of troop-contributing countries with the Secretariat's briefings to donors on activities financed through trust funds, particularly those activities which involve the tasking of peacekeepers.

26. The Council, troop-contributing countries and the Secretariat holding an

assessment meeting at the conclusion of a peacekeeping operation to draw lessons and identify the strong points and lacunae of the operation, which will help improve future operations.

27. Communication and coordination problems within the various components of the Secretariat resulting in troop-contributing countries getting mixed signals and directions should be looked into and given high priority in the upcoming comprehensive review of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations by the Department.

28. The Secretariat should be able to rely on its own sources of information as much as possible, so as to provide more accurate information and analyses in a timely manner. This also means that the Secretariat should have a proper analytical capacity. The concept of an ECPS Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat (EISAS), contained in the Report of the Panel on Peace Operations, should be revisited.

C. Issues

1. Full implementation of other provisions of Security Council resolution 1327 (2000).

2. Consideration of other provisions of General Assembly resolution 55/135.

3. Need for a comprehensive approach to peacekeeping that looks at reform in a cohesive way and raises the professional capability of the United Nations across the board.

4. One of the key needs is the Council giving peacekeeping operations clear, credible and achievable mandates. The phenomenon of incremental reinterpretations of mandates and of "mission creep" should be avoided.

5. The host country of a United Nations peacekeeping operation has the obligation to resolve or manage conflicts, to assist the mission, and to honour its commitment for the continuation of the mission.

6. Peacekeeping operations in volatile situations should, from the onset, have contingency plans, security back-ups and exit strategies with the necessary provisions and facilities.

7. All efforts should be made and further measures developed as a priority

to ensure the safety and security of peacekeepers. A properly planned and mandated mission, comprising well-trained, equipped and disciplined contingents, will contribute significantly to this.

8. The contributions of personnel and resources by all Member States, particularly the Permanent Members of the Security Council and those with the greatest capacity to do so, is critically important for bridging the commitment gap, facilitating rapid deployment and enhancing the credibility, effectiveness and success of United Nations peacekeeping operations.

9. The Council and the Secretariat should be more proactive in motivating potential troop-contributing countries to contribute peacekeepers to United Nations peacekeeping operations. This includes providing them with the necessary information to make a decision.

10. Upgrading the United Nations Standby Arrangements.

11. Priority should be given to those troop-contributing countries participating in the United Nations Standby Arrangements to participate in peacekeeping operations. The troop-contributing countries should aim to commit well-trained and well-equipped troops to the Standby Arrangements. Serious efforts should be made to evaluate and, where necessary, upgrade their assets to United Nations standards through training and technical support from the Secretariat and/or developed countries so as to ensure their readiness for deployment for peacekeeping operations. It could be crucial for a peacekeeping operation that well-trained and well-equipped troops are ready to deploy at short notice when needed.

12. Upgrading of the United Nations Staff College in Turin and establishment of regional United Nations staff colleges to provide the necessary training to military officers of troop-contributing countries, in addition to the ongoing support given to national peacekeeping centres.

13. The Council and the Secretariat should facilitate cross-matching of troops and equipment to reduce the gaps in the contribution of troops.

14. Procurement of armoury in bulk, and at a more reasonable cost, by the United Nations for the equipping of peacekeeping troops.

15. Provision of logistical, training and other technical support by developed countries to troop-contributing countries from the developing

world, even as the former countries participate in peacekeeping operations.

16. Ensuring proper and effective command and control, backed by trained and professional staff. It is essential that all troop-contributing countries, without exception, accept the doctrine of unified United Nations command in United Nations peacekeeping operations.

17. Selection of a highly qualified force commander with the right attributes, and giving the officer the opportunity to interact with Council members and troop-contributing countries through briefing sessions in New York.

18. The Secretariat should be given the necessary human and financial resources to strengthen its capacity to plan, deploy and conduct peacekeeping operations, and to respond to the demands placed on it including improving its quality of service to troop-contributing countries and the Council.

19. Encouraging the Secretariat to make special efforts, if necessary through special media briefings, to project a correct perspective of United Nations peacekeeping operations particularly difficult missions, and the performance of the troops where merited. In a crisis, the Council, the Secretariat and the troop-contributing countries should have a way, perhaps through consultations and joint briefings, to put out a common point of view.

20. Reinforcing cooperation between the United Nations and regional organisations and institutions.

21. Possibility of another open debate on "Strengthening Cooperation with Troop-Contributing Countries" being held in one year's time to gauge how successful we have been in fulfilling the aims - to be considered by the then President of the Council.